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Juanita Bey
Bowie State University

Susan Blunck
University of Maryland

Leontye Lewis
Fayetteville State University, llewis8@uncfsu.edu

Terence Hicks
Fayetteville State University, hicks1906@yahoo.com

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PREPARING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO TEACH AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS USING THE CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRE-SERVICE TEACHER INTERVENTION MODEL

Juanita Ashby Bey
Bowie State University
Susan Blunck
University of Maryland
Leontye L. Lewis
Fayetteville State University
Terence Hicks
Fayetteville State University

Abstract: African Americans experience varying disparities including racial discrimination and cultural discontinuities, which are manifested in public school classrooms. Hence these students struggle academically and are less likely to attend college. This study was designed to investigate the effectiveness a Culturally Relevant Pre-Service Teacher (CRPT) Intervention Model for pre-service teachers. Qualitative methods were used alongside the Cross Racial Identity Scale to respond the effectiveness of CRPT Intervention Sessions. Results indicated that pre-service teachers gained a more in-depth understanding of relationship between their identities within the context of their cultural experiences and all pre-service teachers applied some culturally relevant teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision brought with it cultural discontinuities for African American students in public school systems because teachers were not prepared to teach them effectively. Still, today, educators struggle to implement instructional strategies and curricula designed to foster the academic success and prosperity of African American students. So, how can teacher education programs help failing African American students recover academically? Will integrating identity development and culturally relevant teaching theory in teacher education programs better

prepare pre-service teachers to accommodate African American learners? This study attempted to provide answers to these questions with the implementation and evaluation of Culturally Relevant Pre-Service Teacher (CRPT) Intervention Sessions at a Historically Black Institution (HBI). These sessions were used to engage pre-service teachers in readings, discussions, and analysis of prominent identity development and culturally relevant teaching theorists. As an add-in, historical information about the African Diaspora was also infused.

This study was designed to examine how the CRPT Sessions might influence the identity development and culturally relevant teaching practices of five pre-service teachers. CRPT activities were developed to introduce pre-service teachers to Cross' (1991) theory of Black identity development, Ladson-Billings' (1994) theory of culturally relevant teaching theory, and historical content relative to the African Diaspora. Although many researchers have studied the relationship between teacher identity and teacher practices (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2002; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) these studies have not applied Cross' theory to their research. This research is unique because it examines teacher identity using Cross' theory alongside culturally relevant teaching theory.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Training teachers is a dynamic process and training them to meet the needs of all students provides a very unique challenge. Providing teachers with explicit and specific strategies appropriate for the diverse student population reflected in K-12 classrooms helps them to more effectively address learner differences. More specifically, national and state academic reports indicate that African American students score below all other racial groups in both math and science (NRC, 2008). For this reason, it is vitally important to prepare teachers to address this extremely critical phenomenon. Exposing teachers to the research conducted on teacher identity development and teacher practices, as well as, the use of culturally relevant teaching practices for African American students is most appropriate for accomplishing this task.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND CRPT INTERVENTION SESSIONS

Much of the current research on identity develop is based on Erikson (1968) theory of identity development, which suggests that one's personal identity is developed as a result of psychological connections between childhood and adulthood. Several researchers have developed identity development based on the Erikson's work. For example, Helms (1990) developed stages for White identity development and Cross' (1971) developed stages for Black identity development. However, each of these models reflects a cultural context and is relative to the experiences of an individual.

Similar to Erikson, Giddens (2004) suggests that identity is made rather than inherited and it contains a reflexive process, indicating that identity changes as one reflects upon it. "We create, maintain and revise a set of biographical narratives—the story of who we are, and how we came to be where we are now" (Guantlett, 2004, p. 99). Identity is a fluid process, which cannot be completely changed but is subject to change when

someone's biographical narratives are altered. More importantly, Rosenblum and Travis (2003) indicates that African American students are likely to develop identities that are negative, particularly, when notions of their culture are viewed from the world or community's perspective through an inferior and often stigmatized lens. This identity construction continually evolves into an adult identity construction. As a result, the ideas of Rosenblum and Travis's (2003) and Giddens' (2004) offer much to teacher education programs, particularly with respect to preparing them to counter the national and international oppression inflicted upon African Americans.

Teacher training provides a most appropriate venue to train teaches who are able to infuse content and pedagogy to counter these patterns of identity construction for African American children and tackle the academic challenges or disparities between African American students and other students of other races. Engaging pre-service teachers in research and discussions about the connections between identity development and teacher practices can provide a context for further understanding of diversity in the classroom and its impact on student learning. Several researchers (Sellers, Morgan, & Brown, 2001; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Tolliver, Tisdell, & Eq, 2002) have provided these understandings for us.

For example, Pittard's (2003) research provides insightful understandings useful for training teachers. Pittard stated that teacher education programs should provide time and space for pre-service teachers to discuss and develop identity. Pittard considers identity central to the process of becoming a teacher. Like Pittard, Danielwicz (2001) suggested that pre-service teachers should have the opportunity to explore identity construction over a period of time and encourages teacher education programs to develop curricula, field experiences, and pedagogy that encourage pre-

service teachers to begin to develop their teacher identity.

The Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS), based on Cross' (1971) model, was used in this research to measure identity development in the African American participants. Cross' (1991) Nigrescence Model of Black identity development was developed to measure African Americans' self-perceptions about their race. CRIS includes three phases and six stages of identity development. The Pre-Encounter phase includes the Assimilation (PA), Mis-education (PM), and Self-hatred (PSH) stages, and identifies African Americans who display attitudes of dislike toward their African American race and community. The Immersion-Emersion phase is the second phase and includes the Anti-White (IEAW) stage of development. Anti-White dispositions typically result from a racist event or some other incident of racial inequity and African Americans are grounded in an anti-White ideology rather than a pro-Black ideology. The final phase is Internalization, which includes the Afrocentricity (IA) and Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI) stages. This phase describes African Americans who have internalized being Black and who focus their attention on uplifting their community (Afrocentricity) or from a more global perspective, honor and attention of all cultures and communities (Multiculturalist).

CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING THEORY AND CRPT INTERVENTION SESSIONS

So what is culturally relevant teaching theory? Ladson-Billings is, perhaps, the most prominent contributor of researcher to this theory. Ladson-Billings' (1994) research on effective strategies for teaching African Americans has provided a foundation for much research on accommodating classroom diversity. She indicated that instruction for African American students should include practices, such as, offering notions of praise and camaraderie; integrating cultural literature; making direct connections with the history of the Diaspora;

and integrating cross curricula components relevant to the culture and interests of the student.

However, culturally relevant teaching has been defined in varying ways and sometimes referred to as cultural congruent instruction or cultural responsiveness. For example, Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally relevant teaching as using the culture of students to "maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture . . . to assist in the development of a "relevant black personality" that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture" (p. 17). Cultural congruent instruction is defined as instruction which aligns to the cultural patterns of students, one that build routines and curriculum relative to the students language and culture to improve academic achievement (Ah-Nee Benham & Cooper, 2000; McCarty, 2003). Cultural responsiveness is defined as teaching to the strengths of diverse students and aligning the cultural knowledge and experiences of students to instructional practices (Gay, 2002).

Brown (2007) provides several frameworks appropriate for preparing culturally responsive teachers. According to Brown, Ladson-Billings' (2001) framework includes three propositions, including teachers who focus on individual student achievement, possess cultural competence, and have developed a sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Gay's (2002) framework includes five components, suggesting that teachers are knowledgeable of cultural diversity, apply culturally relevant curricula, build cultural learning communities, establish cross-cultural communications, and establish congruity in classroom instruction. Finally, Brown provides Villegas and Lucas' (2002) six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, which include teachers who possess a sociocultural consciousness, embrace differences among students, understand their responsibility to bring forth changes in school

settings, understand how students learn, are familiar with the lives of the students they teach, and use this knowledge for instructional purposes.

Culturally relevant teaching theory is a component of CRPT Intervention Sessions, grounded primarily on the framework and examples provided by Ladson-Billings (1994). Effectively infusing culturally relevant teaching practices can help to reverse the process of stigmatized identity construction on African Americans who attend urban schools. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that a major component of culturally relevant teaching is to have students develop a "broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, morals, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. If school is about preparing students for active citizenship, what better citizenship tool than the ability to critically analyze the society?" (p. 162). She insisted that culturally relevant teaching does not simply apply to the use of culturally grounded skills and abilities. Culturally relevant teaching practices should also include the use of strategies that promote critical thinking skills and encourage African American students to critically engage with others in the world. When teacher education programs infuse this sort of relevant content into their programs, pre-service teachers are prepared to facilitate an empowered identity in their African American students.

Researchers have challenged educators to look beyond mainstream curriculum and ideas of multiculturalism to adopt culturally relevant teaching practices to support African American students (Hale, 2001; Hilliard, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994). For example, Allen & Boykin (1992) suggested that "the afrocultural experience fosters affect, harmonic interdependence, movement expressiveness, and communalism, while the mainstream experience nurtures logic over feelings, compartmentalization and separateness, movement compressiveness, and self-contained individu-

alism" (p. 589). African Americans, generally, have these Afrocultural experiences, yet it is within the mainstream context that public school curricula are constructed. Teachers teach to these mainstream learning styles, mainstream language, and mainstream norms.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003) proposed the use of culturally relevant teaching practices to support these students in overcoming academic challenges. As a result, Culturally Relevant Pre-service Teacher (CRPT) Intervention Sessions were organized as an extension of the regular methods courses for pre-service teachers in an elementary education program. The CRPT sessions were grounded in a participatory action research approach, which was developed to conduct research specific to the concerns of marginalized and disenfranchised individuals (Creswell, 2003; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), which includes African Americans. Case study methods (Wolcott, 1990) were used to collect data for this project. A case study approach to qualitative research provided "comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 447) for individual participant data and group data (Wolcott, 1990). Member checks were used to elicit participants' perspectives on their own identity development and use of culturally relevant teaching practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, CRIS evaluation instrument was used to provide data on identity development.

PARTICIPANTS

The five African American, female participants were seniors enrolled in an elementary education program in a Historically Black College (HBC) and were selected using purposeful sampling. According to Patton (2002) purposeful sampling was used to reflect:

the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research. (p. 46)

Glense's (1999) interpretation of purposeful sampling offers a more specific understanding of sampling. This research project used a convenient, purposeful case sampling technique described by Glesne as a process to gain in-depth, information-rich data on participants who are readily accessible to the researcher.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRE-SERVICE TEACHER (CRPT) INTERVENTION MODEL

The naturalist approach refers to research that is "conducted in the native environment to see people and their behavior given all the real world incentives and constraints" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 31). The real world qualities embedded in the naturalist approach provided authentic data on the teaching strategies selected by the research participants (Fetterman, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Because pre-service teachers were placed in elementary school classrooms with mentor teachers to teach content based lessons, the authentic nature of the naturalist approach sufficiently accommodated the goals of this research. It provided opportunities to observe the behaviors of pre-service teachers in a real world instructional setting, the classroom.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRE-SERVICE TEACHER (CRPT) INTERVENTION SESSIONS

During CRPT sessions, participants read, discussed, and analyzed the works and philosophies of Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973), John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938), bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), Charles Christian's *Black Saga: The African American Experience* (1999), Gloria Ladson-Billing's (1994) and others' (e.g., Hale, 2001; Hilliard, 1990) ideas of culturally relevant teaching. Participants

also participated in intense discussions on Cross' (1991) identity development theory. The CRPT discussions also included possible instructional implications that the ideas of these researchers might have on the educational experiences of African American children. The diagram below provides a visual interpretation of the varying components considered for the CRPT sessions.

These CRPT Intervention Sessions were a modification of the methods course requirements for the elementary education program. The traditional format of education methods courses is a sixteen-week semester on site at Ambe' Elementary School, an urban inner city school. During the first eight weeks of the semester, pre-service teachers are instructed in the theories and practices in elementary school reading, science, language arts, and social studies methods, facilitated by university faculty. For the second eight weeks, the pre-service teachers are each assigned to a mentor teacher for practicum experience in the elementary classroom. Pre-service teachers complete sixteen weeks of student teaching with the same mentor teacher.

For this project, the first eight weeks of courses adhered to the traditional structure of the methods courses and CRPT sessions began during the second eight weeks. The second eight weeks was Phase I of the project with Intervention Sessions scheduled for two hours each week. Phase II of the project began during the first eight weeks of the student teaching.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Qualitative data were collected using structured journal responses to ensure consistency in focus between the participant reflections. Group and individual cultural interviews were conducted to establish shared meaning among participants and to provide flexible boundaries to allow participants to interject important questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). According to Patton (2002), the primary

purpose of observations is to collect observed data to describe activities and decipher meaning. For this study, two videotaped observations were completed in Phase I and two in Phase II for each participant. Each observation concluded with an audio taped debriefing session. The audio taped debriefing sessions were transcribed and provided qualitative data on pre-service teachers' interpretations of their challenges and triumphs with lesson implementation.

Field notes and member checks were used to document participant progress. According to Liamputtong & Ezzy (2005), field notes are used by researchers to put their experiences and observations into words. Field notes typically include descriptions, interpretations, and perceptions of research events. Field notes were recorded to describe, interpret, and record initial perceptions and reactions of the researcher after encounters with study participants. Member checks were used to elicit participants' perspectives on their own identity development and use of culturally relevant teaching practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The Cross (2000) CRIS instrument was used to collect identity data for all participants, "a scale designed to measure the theoretical constructs proposed in the most recent incarnation of nigrescence theory" (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002, p. 71).

DATA ANALYSIS

According to Patton (2002), establishing a substantive significance for the presentation of qualitative data findings and conclusions is vital in the analysis process. He asserted that:

The qualitative analyst's effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories includes using both creative and critical faculties in making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data. Since qualitative analysts do not have statistical tests to tell them when an observation or pattern is significant, they must rely first on their own intelligence, experience, and judgment; second they should take seriously

the responses of those who were studied or participated in the inquiry; and third, the researcher or evaluator should consider the responses and reactions of those who read and review the results. (p. 466)

Patton's (2002) process for the manual coding and identification of classifications and codes in qualitative data was used to uncover data themes. The primary purpose for manual coding of qualitative data is to identify the core content data from interviews, observations, and other forms of qualitative data. Multiple readings were conducted to uncover the common themes in the data (Patton, 2002).

In addition to the manual coding procedures identified by Patton (2002), Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1994) written picture concept was also applied to the writing of individual and group cases. Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1994) written pictures of the experiences of six African American middle class people engage her readers and bring them into the lives of her participants. She insisted that participant portraits are only generated when a researcher respects, advocates for, and admires her participants. The manual coding from qualitative data analysis were used to compose written pictures of pre-service teacher participants. Having spent extensive time sharing and discussing relevant theory, listening to the passionate and personal reflections of participants, manual analysis was most appropriate for developing written pictures or portraits of research participants.

CRIS data were analyzed according to the guidelines provided by Cross. Vandiver, Cross, Worrell and Fhagen-Smith (2002) conducted a study to validate the CRIS instrument as and determined that the 6 CRIS Subscales was supported by an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Additionally, correlates between "CRIS and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) , supported the convergent validity of the CRIS" (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002, p. 71).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

VALUE OF THE CRPT INTERVENTION SESSIONS

Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the value of CRPT Intervention Sessions were overwhelmingly positive as they consider them necessary inclusions into teacher education programs. The combination of readings from Friere and Cross helped participants to gain more in-depth understanding of their individual personal and social oppression and to discover how being oppressed helped to shape their identities. The data also indicated that pre-service teachers gained an understanding of the difference between multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching, which are conceptually and instructionally different.

Minorities typically experience some sort of oppression, including racial, sexual, and/or institutional all of which impede the social, economic, or academic progression. The CRPT Intervention Sessions helped to expose the African American pre-service teachers to the far-reaching realities of what it means to be oppressed. Participants shared a general understanding of their social oppression; however, these sessions helped participants to realize that oppressive dynamics are present within educational institutions, as well as within the context of economic and social capitals. These inferior notions that derive from oppression had, in part, encouraged these African American participants to view themselves through an inferior lens. This realization helped to foster the understanding of the relationship between their oppression and their identities, including the idea that this oppression was in some way imbedded into their current identity structures.

One function of the CRPT Sessions was to introduce participants, and have them explore the people, places, and events connected, to the history of the African Diaspora. This type of content is not typically included in PreK-16 curriculum, which means that like most

African American people and people in general, participants were not knowledgeable about the many positive and innovative contributions African Americans have made to our society, which, ultimately, contributes to the identity development of the participants. The vignette below titled, *Empowered*, illustrates Chai's process with reconciling her new historical knowledge about the Diaspora with her culture, identity, and instructional strategies.

Empowered

Exposure to African American history has helped to enhance my personal knowledge of culture. It has opened my mind to the excellence, intelligence, and strength that a people can possess. Many things that I have been reacquainted with existed in my subconscious. It has been very much appreciated that I have been stimulated to think about the importance of a person background. I know that I will have to be diligent in my own personal and intellectual development by reading and contextualizing, critically, all genres of information. We have a rich, spiritual, and beautiful culture, and I will continue to reflect on and include this heritage in my life and instruction. I will continue to use this knowledge to increase the self-esteem of myself and my students.

Although this vignette reflects the only reference to self-esteem made by Chai, she indicated that the exposure to culturally relevant and identity development theory helped to improve her self-esteem. Further, the sessions helped her begin to think about the sociocultural dynamic of learning. In appreciation of her own personal and academic development, while participating in the CRPT Intervention Sessions, she acquired a renewed appreciation for critical thinking and welcomed the opportunity to challenge researchers as a pathway to engage in lifelong learning.

Establishing the difference between multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching was also indicated by pre-service teachers as a valuable outcome of the CRPT Sessions. As we discussed and analyzed culturally relevant teaching practices, pre-

service teachers developed a distinctive concept that contrasted culturally relevant teaching with multicultural education. They began to speak of multicultural education as broad sweeping understanding or the acknowledgment of cultural diversity or of learning to be bicultural (Gay, 1994). On the other hand, culturally relevant teaching provided a more accurate, focused, and explicit approach to teaching or the use of curricula content and instructional strategies to accommodate the cultural norms of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994). Mariama's vignette, *Changing Perspective*, illustrates her personal discovery and interpretation of the multiculturalism opposed to cultural relevancy, leading to identity change.

Changing Perspective

The methods intervention sessions created within me a hunger for new information. We were constantly being fed and information was always being reinforced through active participation. With consistent discussions about the literature composed by CRT theorists and how those ideas might be applied in individual classroom situations and I began to gain a different understanding of CRT. Prior to the intervention sessions, I had a different perspective of culturally relevant teaching. Throughout my studies I have learned about multicultural learning environments or creating a diverse setting but never culturally relevant teaching. This knowledge of CRT strategies of AA students is extremely vital and beneficial because it disputes the argument that this population is unable to be educated. The affects that the sessions have had on what and how I teach is that I feel validated in what I do in the classroom. I love movement, singing, and expressions of creativity. Having the knowledge of CRT increases my confidence and comfort level of applying these strategies. I am not reluctant to use this because research supports its appropriateness. It was unfortunate that the sessions had to end so soon, because I feel that there is more to learn and discuss.

There are still some things that I am unsure of, but my ability to be an effective teacher is no longer one of them. My favorite singer has a line in her song, "Everybody knows that they lied, everybody know they perpetrated inside."

I did not want to lie because if I couldn't face my feeling of inferiority, then how would I address and correct them. I made the promise that I would be 100% honest with myself even if it hurts.

I realize that the most significant impact has not been on my personal development but on my professional development as a teacher. The sessions have forced me to look at the social institution of public education. They have also forced me to reshape my philosophy of education as well as my role as a teacher.

Much of Mariama's data indicated that she struggled with issues of confidence; however, one benefit she experienced from the CRPT Intervention Sessions was help in admitting this struggle and how it contributed to her apprehensions about teaching. The references she made to her favorite lyrics, "Everybody knows that they lied, everybody know that they perpetrate inside," appeared to have new meaning for her as she began to understand the value and importance of being honest about her confidence level. Her data indicated that the sessions were also able to help her with identifying this reality in order to begin building her confidence as a beginning teacher. Mariama's conceptual understanding of multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching practices were altered. Discovering that research supported her own notions of the relevance of movement, singing, and creative expression as a teacher of African American children appeared to help her validate her own beliefs of how to effectively teach and engage with her African American students.

IMPACT OF CRPT INTERVENTION SESSIONS ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY

Pittard (2003) suggested that there is a direct connection between teacher identity and teacher practices and the data from this study suggested the same. In fact, when there was a shift in the identity development of pre-service teachers, there was a shift in how they conceptualize teaching and/or their instructional

strategies. According to the final CRIS surveys, all participants experienced some shift in their identity; however, identity shifts did not occur in any systematic or consistent way. Data from the final identity survey indicated three participants shifted to the IA stage—Chai who has a subscale average of 21.33 out of 35, Tecola with a subscale average of 27, and Mariama with a subscale average of 23. These averages indicated that Chai, Tecola, and Mariama viewed race from an Afrocentric perspective with the primary goal to build and enhance their communities. Two participants shifted to the IMCI stage—Michele and Ebony who have a subscale average of 29, suggesting they view race from a more inclusive perspective in which they consider all races of people as valuable and contributory to society.

To introduce Ebony, she is a self-proclaimed “Army Brat” with very little experience in an urban community and with the African American population in general. Spindler and Spindler (1987) identified culture as a cumulative “product of human information processing as well as a template for it” (p. 66), which helps to place Ebony’s noted challenges in context. Although Ebony’s CRIS data suggested she placed in the IMCI phase, she indicated that she may not be absolutely certain about an obvious change in her identity; but her experience teaching in urban schools has helped her to at least begin to consider the relationship between culture and learning. She had begun to consider that the experiences of urban students require individualized instruction that is consistent with their urban cultural experiences. In the passage below Ebony shares her attempts to connect with her urban students based on their cumulative knowledge and her own identity development.

I attempt to connect to [my students] personalities and their likes and dislikes. I bring in the musical element, or discuss the similarities in our lives, or try to appeal to what brings them pleasure. I think as I get to know them better, I can link this information to my lessons. This is where I believe my identity

development has evolved somewhat. I am currently immersed in an entirely different culture than that in which I live, so it is a challenge to bring culturally relevant teaching to the classroom. As I continue to connect with my students, I continue to reflect how my identity has changed over the last several months. As I have said before, I do not believe it has changed much. I think the most significant development since I have attended the university and conducted my student teaching experience at Ambe’ Elementary has been my exposure to the inner city.

As a result of my growing up as a military dependent and growing up mostly on Army bases and in the suburbs, I think that I have absorbed many images and beliefs of the “dominant group.” I do have the notion that I am an “American.” Additionally, I see myself as an American or a black American, not an African American. This is because I feel “African American” is a label created by the dominant group. I am of the opinion that my beliefs have been influenced by my upbringing in the military and where I currently live. There was no surprise here. I do tend to follow the group, or assimilate, and mold to fit where I am dependent upon the situation and the environment. I do not believe I have severe self-hatred views. I do not hate myself. I relax my hair and as such there are some personal images involved in that. The results under “Afrocentricity” I believe can be somewhat misleading. I only recently even became aware of this term and am still not totally certain what “Afrocentricity” means. My answers under this stage were meant to be neutral because I do not think I feel strongly one way or another about it; however, my ratings give the appearance of being average rather than neutral.

Through the use of the member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), Ebony was able to share her contradictions with the CRIS survey results with respect to her own perceptions of her identity development. Although she continually states her notions of the importance of multicultural education rather than culturally relevant teaching practices, what is most important is that she is fully involved in examining her own identity development.

IMPACT OF CRPT INTERVENTION SESSIONS
ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER USE OF

CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING PRACTICES

Ladson-Billings (1994) identified specific strategies that are effective for teaching African American students and data were analyzed using instructional indicators from Ladson-Billings' research those strategies. Pre-service teachers' use of culturally relevant teaching strategies adhered to Allen and Boykin's (1992) notions, as well as Ladson-Billings' (1994) because the teachers were able to infuse notions of praise and camaraderie into instruction, as well planned lessons that used cultural literature and positive cultural and self-images of African Americans so as to make connections to their African American student population.

The most interesting findings on integrating the CRPT Intervention Sessions are that only one participant infused issues related to sociopolitical critique, political expression, or community responsibility during one lesson and participants did not infuse concepts of the African Diaspora into their lessons. None of the pre-service teachers made direct connections to the historical social, academic, or political contributions made by Africans or African Americans, which suggests that they lack the relevant knowledge to address these elements of culturally relevant teaching. The lack of infusion of African Diaspora concepts in the classroom and the insufficient knowledge base of African Americans relative to the Diaspora is a consistent finding of this research. Yet, these concepts are crucial to effective application of culturally relevant teaching practices and the research suggests that intervention activities require modifications to reinforce these elements.

MERGING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING PRACTICES

Sellers, Morgan, and Brown's (2001) research makes direct connections to teacher identity and its effectiveness with teachers of African American students, which was true for the

research participants. The individual merging processes of the participants was based on their current identities, which were situated in their informal cultural experiences. Pre-service teachers insisted that being aware of their own identity was central to their ability to infuse culturally relevant teaching practices. Such awareness helped them to enhance their understanding of the importance of being reflective teachers and being cognizant of what contributes to the construction of their identity. These understandings encouraged pre-service teachers to apply culturally relevant teaching practices to facilitate the identity development in their students using positive and relevant content and processes. Additionally, this awareness helped pre-service teachers to counter socially constructed ideas of inferiority and teach their students to do the same.

For example, Michele, a twenty-two year-old African American who was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, loved dancing and insists that learning should be engaging and active, consistent with her experiences with dancing. Her beginning and ending placement on Cross' Identity Scale was in the IMCI stage. Michele applied culturally relevant teaching practices consistent with her IMCI placement on Cross' scale of Black identity development. She planned lessons to encourage students to question mainstream ideas about race and equality, as well as lessons to accommodate the varying learning styles of her students. She planned lessons that included the use of visuals, varying technologies, and lessons that engaged her students in solving science and math problems with the use of instructional manipulatives. She consistently incorporated direct connections to her students' experiences as well appropriate and positive examples of African Americans. Teaching her students to be responsible for their own learning and community and helping them to realize education as a practice of freedom are also culturally relevant concepts that Michele indicated central to her merging process. Michele insists that being self-aware was her

first step in effectively applying culturally relevant teaching strategies. However, consistent with IMCI attitudes toward race, she is committed to teaching using culturally relevant strategies and to continuing to enhance her cultural awareness of herself and others so that she is a well-rounded teacher.

During the final phase of the intervention sessions, Michele offered this insight to illustrate her individual process for merging her identity development with her use of culturally relevant teaching practices.

We live in a society that promotes education as the means to success, but for African Americans it should be more than just a means to success. It must bridge the gap of all the lost history and education of our people. Through the stimulating conversation amongst my peers, I recognize a whole new Michele that is willing to challenge what people would like for her to know versus what she should know as a young African American college student. So I am accommodating to my students in that I encourage them to embrace their differences. In my identity development I realize that culture is a determining factor that affects the education of students because my teachers were not mindful of the cultural factors that affected my learning style. They [teachers] often associated it with bad behavior. As I teach, I am mindful of my students' environment, and I take that into consideration with my discipline strategies. The stories that I select for reading instruction are ones that embrace the African culture and relate to their experiences. I often try to make connections to students because those connections are what make learning exciting for them.

Although Michele, a New York City native, and Ebony, a self-proclaimed Army Brat who had not prior experience in African American communities, identify themselves Multiculturalist, the context with which their identities were constructed resulted in different but appropriate teacher practices. Ebony's identity construction created within her the motivation

to expose her students to experiences from a multicultural perspective. It appears that after her initial struggles with finding balance between her cultural identity and that of her students, reflected in the example below, she began to have success with infusing culturally relevant teaching practices.

I am also enjoying exposing my students in the classroom to world music. I play selections by Putumayo Music, a music label that produces albums featuring music from different countries. At first, the children just listened to the songs during a brief "quiet time" after lunch. Over time, they began to sing along and stomp with the songs. One day, the entire class sang one of the songs quietly to the very end. It was like a mini-concert. Last week I began playing a different CD that allows them to follow directions and dance around. They always ask when they can do it again. I am tickled that they like the music and songs. It is fun to watch them play and dance.

Recognizing the challenge of building bridges and making connections to build rapport with her urban student population, during her last week of her student teaching experience, Ebony appeared to become a bit excited with her ability to apply culturally relevant teaching practices. Ebony made significant progress with finding a cultural balance and continuing to explore the notion of customizing her culturally relevant teaching practices. She shared her experience of "discovering a whole new world in the inner-city and what these students have experienced" as she realizes that all experiences, no matter what community we grow up in or what ethnic group to which they belong, share commonalities.

The data from this study revealed that this merging process was a very personal and individual one for pre-service teachers, yet the merging experiences of these teachers suggest several implications for integrating CRPT Intervention Sessions into teacher education programs. For example, teacher education programs must acknowledge that African Americans contend with many stereotypes and socially constructed ideas of academic inferiority that contribute to their identity

construction. As a result, teacher education programs must prepare a platform for pre-service teachers to critically examine how students in their programs have come to their current identities. In addition, applying CRPT Intervention Sessions requires a balance of theory that supports Pre K-12 students through the implementation of culturally relevant teaching practices and to help them understand themselves as teachers using identity development theory.

CONCLUSION

The inherent goal of teacher education programs is to prepare teachers who can effectively teach all students, and the implications for integrating the CRPT Intervention Model provide insight to support teacher education programs with this integration. It must be clearly understood that teachers who have an awareness of the multiple variables that impact the learning experiences of students, including oppression, race, and class, have the potential to drastically change their approaches to teaching and help to produce African American students who are academically competitive (Datum, 1992; hooks, 1994). In addition, when accurate and explicit content with regard to race, class, oppression, and the African Diaspora are infused into teacher education programs, teachers are better prepared to help African American students to counter notions of inequity.

A major lesson learned from the CRPT Intervention Sessions is the lack of general knowledge about the African Diaspora. Teachers, regardless of their race, who teach African American students, must possess sufficient knowledge about the accomplishments and social contributions of African and African American people. Without sufficient content knowledge about the Diaspora, classroom content will likely lack relevance for African American students. Teachers require this knowledge to help students construct

identities that are grounded in pride and accomplishment rather than inferiority.

It is suggested that teacher education programs utilize the CRPT Intervention Model to help prepare pre-service teachers to accommodate African American students. This models can be infused as an integrated or intervention process to bring an awareness of identity to pre-service teachers and prepare them to infuse culturally relevant teaching practices. Additionally, considering that many African American teachers have attended public schools that are grounded in hegemonic content and practices, higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to consider how to provide educational experiences to counter hegemonic norms. Teachers will need to be prepared to think critically about themselves, more specifically, African American teachers need to understand their ability and responsibility to question, resist, challenge, and become active in changing political, social, and economic oppression. Minimally, teacher education programs must accept their responsibility to help in recovering the failing African American students by providing exposure to culturally relevant teaching practices for pre-service teachers.

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